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POULENC TRIO

The Poulenc Trio is the most active touring pianowind chamber music ensemble in the world. Since its founding in 2003, the trio has performed in forty-five U.S. states and at music festivals around the world, including the Ravello Festival in Italy, the San Miguel de Allende Festival in Mexico, and the White Nights Festival in Russia, where the group toured and premiered two new works with violinist Hilary Hahn. *The New York Times* praised the trio for its "elegant rendition" of Piazzolla's Tangos, and *The Washington Post* said the trio "does its namesake proud" in "an intriguing and beautifully played program" with "convincing elegance, near effortless lightness and grace."

A strong commitment to new music includes commissioning, performing, and recording works from living composers. Since its founding, the trio has greatly expanded the repertoire available for oboe, bassoon, and piano, with no fewer than twenty-two new works written for and premiered by the group, including three triple concertos for the trio and full orchestra.

The Poulenc Trio launched a pioneering concert series called Music at the Museum, in which musical performances are paired with museum exhibitions, with special appearances from guest artists and curators. As part of the series, the trio has collaborated with the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Walters Art Museum, the Baltimore Museum of Art, and the Hermitage State Museum in Russia.

In addition, the trio is deeply engaged in musical and educational outreach programs, including "Pizza and Poulenc," an informal performance and residency series for younger audiences. The trio regularly conducts masterclasses, most recently at the University of Ohio, San Francisco State University, Florida State University, and the University of Colima in Mexico.

The Poulenc Trio was scheduled to perform for AFCM in April 2020 when COVID intervened. We are happy to welcome them for their first appearance on our stage.

THIS AFTERNOON'S PROGRAM

FRANCIS POULENC (1899-1963)

Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano

Presto Andante Rondo

VIET CUONG (b. 1990)

Trains of Thought (2012) (written for the Poulenc Trio)

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

"Romance" from The Gadfly Suite, Op. 97a (arranged by Anatoly Trofimov)

"A Spin Through Moscow" from Cheryomushki, Op. 105 (arranged by Anatoly Trofimov)

INTERMISSION

JAMES LEE III (b. 1975)

Principal Brothers No. 4 (dedicated to Bryan Young)

Allegretto Tenderly Bright and Lively

ANDRÉ PREVIN (1929-2019)

Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano

Lively Slow Jaunty

CHARLES-LOUIS TRIÉBERT (1810–1867) & EUGÈNE LOUIS-MARIE JANCOURT (1815–1901)

Fantaisie concertante sur L'italiana in Algeri de Gioacchino Rossini

"Above all, a composer should not aim to be fashionable. If you are not fashionable today, you may not be unfashionable tomorrow."

FRANCIS POULENC

POULENC WAS BORN IN PARIS and attained both a distinct musical voice and success at an early age. During the 1920s, he was one of the leading spirits of the group of young French composers known as *Les Six*. Their music was often light, witty, satirical, and urbane. They were in sympathy with and influenced by Stravinsky and neoclassicism, and in opposition to the cerebral music of Schoenberg and of what they considered to be the religio-musical excesses of their countryman Olivier Messiaen. Poulenc, in particular, often juxtaposes passages of wit and irony with lush, sentimental outpourings.

The Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano is one of Poulenc's most popular chamber works. It is in the spirit of an eighteenth-century divertissement, light and witty, yet spiced with dissonances. It is eminently logical, combining and contrasting the two members of the double reed family with the percussive quality of the piano. Poulenc took the advice of Ravel (with whom he had been studying) and based the opening Presto on a Haydn Allegro, and the closing Rondo's refrain begins as a near perfect quote of a well-known Beethoven melody until it makes a surprising turn into the fresh vocabulary of Poulenc's own distinctive language. Poulenc hinted that he patterned this movement after a piano concerto by Saint-Saëns. The Andante is gracefully Mozartean, though any suggestion of parody is dispelled by alluring shifts of tonality and chromaticism. The work is dedicated to Manuel de Falla, whom Poulenc had met at the home of his teacher, Ricardo Viñes, in 1918. David Ewen writes, "One is sometimes reminded of a chase, sometimes a dialogue.... The main musical discourse is entrusted to the piano, while the bassoon is relegated to the role of a discreet commentator and the oboe is allowed to intensify the more lyrical flights. The very heart of Poulenc is in this adroit little work."

DESCRIBED AS "SHOW-STEALING" (*Baltimore City Paper*) and a "dazzler" (*Broad Street Review*), Viet Cuong's music has been performed in venues across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Singapore, and Japan. He has been a Naumburg and Roger Sessions Fellow in Princeton University's doctoral program, and holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Peabody Conservatory. He is among the youngest composers to receive residencies from the Atlantic Center for the Arts, the Ucross Foundation, and Yaddo. Awards include the ASCAP Morton Gould Composers Award, Dolce Suono Ensemble Young Composers Competition, and the Prix d'Été Composition Competition.

The composer writes about Trains of Thought: "As I was writing the piece, it began to take on quite a similar atmosphere to my older piece named Pulse Train... so much, that I chose to continue this theme of trains that aren't actually locomotives, yet still evoke the feeling of a moving train. I hope that this will be an intriguing yet engaging piece for audiences. The piece basically has a consistent tempo for the entire duration, but the colors, registers, and even harmonies vary widely. My goal was to unify these different elements through a consistent, intense rhythmic drive. In addition, I thought (even more than I usually do) about a listener's expectations and how to successfully set up these expectations and manipulate them. Both of these ideas touch on the 'train of thought' concept. Ideas often meander aimlessly in one's mind, and one's stream of consciousness can end up somewhere very unexpected. However, different thoughts are usually connected through some sort of common thread. I hope this makes some sense!

"The only 'extended techniques' I used were some pretty heavy use of *bisbigliando* (timbral trills), which I notated as quarter-tones, and very spare dampening of the strings in the piano with the fingers."

IN A MUSICAL CAREER spanning half a century, Shostakovich engrossed himself with a staggeringly diverse range of genres and styles. Beyond the fifteen symphonies and fifteen string quartets, the lesserknown works of Shostakovich offer intrigue and interest likewise. With the reappraisal of Shostakovich in recent times, his light music is beginning to enjoy unprecedented popularity in concert halls and record catalogues. "Romance" is the most famous movement of the suite from The Gadfly, probably Shostakovich's bestknown film score. The film, which was based on the novel of the same name by Ethel Lilian Voynich, was set in 1840s Italy under the dominance of Austria, a time of tumultuous revolt and uprisings. The story centers on the illegitimate son of a cardinal who joins the fight to unite Italy. When caught, he faces the firing squad as a willingly martyr. It is a story of faith, disillusionment, revolution, romance, and heroism. A best seller, it exerted a huge cultural influence, and was compulsory reading in the Soviet Union; indeed by the time of Voynich's death, The Gadfly is estimated to have sold 2,500,000 copies in the Soviet Union alone. "Romance" was used in the BBC/PBS TV series, "Reilly, Ace of Spies."

"A Spin Through Moscow" is the first of the four dance-like movements of the orchestral suite from the comic operetta, *Moscow, Cheryomushki*, written in a bewildering variation of styles, from the Romantic idiom to vulgar popular song. The satirical plot deals with one of the most pressing concerns of urban Russians of the day, the chronic housing shortage and the difficulties of securing livable conditions. "Cheryomushki" translates to "birdcherry trees," the name of a real housing estate in southwest Moscow

BORN IN ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN, James Lee III cites as his major composition teachers Michael Daugherty, William Bolcom, and Bright Sheng. He was also a composition fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center where he studied with Michael Gandolfi. Since Dr. Lee's graduation with a D.M.A. in composition from the University of Michigan in 2005, his orchestral works have been commissioned and premiered by orchestras throughout the U.S. and conducted by such artists as Leonard Slatkin, Marin Alsop, and Michael Tilson Thomas. Chamber organizations such as the Montrose Trio, Ritz Chamber Players, and the Harlem Chamber Players have performed and premiered his music, and pianist Rochelle Sennet recorded his piano music on the Albany Label in 2014. In addition, Dr. Lee's works have been premiered and performed internationally in Brazil, Argentina, Russia, Cuba, and England.

Dr. Lee writes of *Principal Brothers No. 4*: "The year 2020 has definitely been a very challenging year with many upheavals. During this time of the COVID-19 health crisis, wearing masks, and high racial tensions, I decided to compose four short solo woodwind works for flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon, which represent the core woodwind section in an orchestra. I was inspired to compose these short pieces after I first heard Igor Stravinsky's three short pieces for clarinet, which total a little more than four minutes in duration. I thought it would be nice to highlight and honor my African American male colleagues in the orchestral music world, and to celebrate the fact that they are the principal players in the section of their respective orchestras.

"The short pieces are as follows: No. 1 for flute solo for Demarre McGill, Principal Flute of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra; No. 2 for oboe solo for Titus Underwood, Principal Oboe of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra; No. 3 for clarinet solo for Anthony McGill, Principal Clarinet of the New York Philharmonic; and No. 4 for bassoon solo for Bryan Young, Principal Bassoon of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra. These works all begin with notes that are representative of their name; D for Demarre, B for Titus (ti in solfege starting on C), A for Anthony, and B-flat for Bryan. There is also a rhythmic figure in the opening measures of each piece, which represents the utterance of their names. All four of these works are rhapsodic in nature with elements of improvisation. I composed Principal Brothers No. 4 for Bryan Young so that he would be able to not only display his wonderful technical ability, but he would also shine in the various ranges of the instrument as he makes the bassoon sing very beautifully and full of expression."

ANDRÉ PREVIN WAS BORN to a Jewish family in Berlin and emigrated with them to the United States in 1939 to escape the Nazis. He became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1943 and grew up in Los Angeles. An Oscar winner, Previn toured and recorded as a jazz pianist, and was principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra as well as music director of the Houston Symphony, the Pittsburgh Symphony, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His compositions range from chamber and orchestral music to his opera, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Previn composed his Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano in 1994 on a joint commission from the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. Music for this combination of instruments is unusual but by no means unique; French composers in particular loved the sound of woodwinds, and in some ways Previn's trio shows virtues that might be thought typically French: clarity, careful attention to the character of the individual instruments, and a sense of play and fun. Yet if the impulse behind this music might be thought French, here it has an American accent: Previn's trio is full of energy, jazz rhythms, and the open harmonies that have, since the time of Copland and Harris, distinguished American music.

The trio is in three movements. The opening, marked "Lively," moves from a spiky beginning through a flowing second theme-group introduced by the bassoon and marked espressivo. The basic metric markings in this movement are 2/4 and 4/4, but Previn frequently interrupts this even pulse with individual measures in subdivisions such as 7/8, 5/8, 3/4, 7/16, and others. It is indeed a "lively" movement, precisely for the vitality of its rhythms, and a brief coda drives to an emphatic close on a unison B-flat.

In the second movement, "Slow," a piano prelude leads to the entrance of the solo oboe; this entrance is marked "lonely," a marking that might apply to the entire movement, where long chromatic woodwind lines wind their way above chordal accompaniment. The music rises to a climax, then falls away to conclude on its opening material, now varied. The third movement, "Jaunty," changes meter almost by measure. Previn treats the two wind instruments as a group and sets them in contrast to the piano, which has extended solo passages. The leaping opening idea reappears in many forms, including inversion, and near the end the tempo speeds ahead as Previn specifies that the music should be played with "jazz phrasing": these riffs alternate with brief piano interludes marked "simply." Gradually the movement's opening theme reasserts itself, and the trio rushes to its blistering close, once again on a unison B-flat.

THE CONCERT FANTASY THAT CONCLUDES tonight's program is from a collection of operainspired arrangements dating from 19th-century Paris and the salon music of that time. It contains works by the opera composers Rossini and Donizetti, who were the delight of the Parisian audiences, in potpourri arrangements by the oboe and bassoon virtuosi (and Conservatoire professors) of the day Charles-Louis Triébert, Henri Brod, and Eugène Jancourt. These works were not only "tuneful" but enabled the performers to show off their ample virtuosity very well. The rousing Fantaisie Concertante, based on tunes from Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, is such a work.

Notes provided by the Poulenc Trio and Eric Bromberger (Previn)

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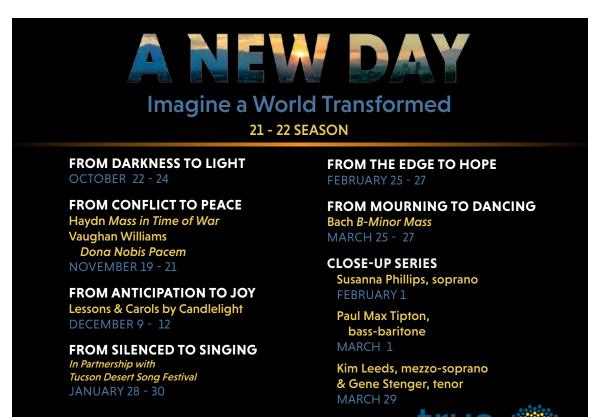






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